

THE WEATHER
Unsettled; probable rain on Monday night and Tuesday; cooler in south and east Monday.
Hourly temperatures: 5 a. m. 65, 1 p. m. 71, 4 a. m. 63, 2 p. m. 74, 8 a. m. 62, 3 p. m. 75, 10 a. m. 64, 4 p. m. 72, 11 a. m. 64, 6 p. m. 71, 12 noon 68, 7 p. m. 69

THE OMAHA DAILY BEE

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OMAHA, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1919. ***

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TWO CENTS.

MOB JEERS AS COUNTY STRUCTURE IS BURNING

Each Burst of Flame Greeted With Cheers—Crowd Watches Upper Floor to See If Jailors Are Smoked Out.

WOMEN AND GIRLS NUMEROUS IN CROWD

Men Cut Fire Hose—Building Burns Three Hours Before Stream Turned On—Shoot Until Negro Dies.

The spectacular features attending the burning of the magnificent Douglas county court house, with damage estimated from \$200,000 to \$500,000, were entirely subordinated to various aspects of the crowd's action, which were without precedent in any affair of the kind that has taken place in the country in the past quarter century.

For three hours the fire burned, soon after room being set afire by members of the mob, without hindrance from police or firemen, the latter being utterly unable during that time to get a stream played on any of the rooms. The first hose was not turned loose until about 10:30, and then only after the shooting on the Eighteenth street side, which heralded the capture and death of the negro, and the achievement of the mob's purpose.

"It's All Over." It was then that a truck ran a hose out at the Farnam and Seventeenth street corner. Some of the crowd jumped instantly to cut the hose, but were restrained by others who shouted: "Let 'em alone. It's all right now, we've got the nigger and it's all over."

No Injury to Firemen. No injury was done the firemen in preventing their efforts to reach the fire, possibly for the reason that any effort on their part to combat the mob would have been useless. A fire truck that drove up to Farnam and Seventeenth street was greeted with hoots and jeers by the crowd, which made way for it, but surged around again when the hose was run out and attached to the street plug. "Cut the hose," yelled some one, and within a moment scores of knives had hacked the tough fabric of the hose to pieces.

The same attitude was maintained by the crowd with the advent of each succeeding fire wagon, until it became apparent that no legally constituted authority in the city could do anything to stop the burning.

The Offices Burned. Starting with the county treasurer's office, the following rooms were set afire by members of the mob, and wholly gutted with all contents: County treasurer's office, first floor. Election commissioners' rooms, first floor. Sheriff's office, fourth floor. County clerk's office, first floor. The district clerk's office, second floor. The county attorney's office, third floor. Red Cross rooms, basement. The flames spread to other rooms of the building, but the above were wholly burned out, with contents and window facings.

Mob Used Gasoline. Gasoline was used to start the flames, the first room to burn being the county treasurer's office. The fluid was turned on the floor, desks and chairs, and the latter placed in a pile in the center of the room.

A mighty cheer burst from the crowd with the first explosion of flames through the windows, and the mob surged around to the Farnam street side from Seventeenth and Eighteenth street. Within a few minutes entrance was made into rooms on the third and fourth floors on the Seventeenth street side of the building, and within an hour they burned fiercely, five rooms on the fourth floor being gutted, the flames reaching from the end of the building to a point over the middle of the great central doorway.

The fire in the county clerk's office was started by three or four youths, apparently only 14 or 16 years of age. They were seen at work piling chairs in the center of the room, their actions being followed with cheers by the mob. Then the match was applied, and amid cheers and shots from the crowd they climbed out on the window ledge to watch the progress of the flames.

Crowds Cheer Flame Bursts. With each burst of flames from the windows the crowd set up a cheer, which drew the members of the mob on the side streets surging around to the front. Flame bursts from the side streets, with resultant yells, took them back again, and in this manner the progress of the fire continued during the three hours that it burned.

Women and Children. The make-up of the crowd was largely that of spectators. A great number of women and girls were in the thick of the jam at all hours, crowding up within a few feet of the burning building, and apparently oblivious to danger, or secure in the feeling that no harm would come to them.

Above them the air whistled with the shooting that was constantly going on, men scattered through the crowd constantly pulling revolvers and firing them into the air. Holiday Shooting. During the early hours of the night, following the start of the fire, and up to the time the ladder was raised on the Harney street

OMAHA MOB HANGS AND BURNS NEGRO WHO ASSAULTED GIRL

MIDNIGHT MEET ASKS MILITARY LAW TODAY

Prominent Business Men Confer With Commissioners in Council Chamber and Demand Martial Law at Once.

OFFICIALS CONDEMNED FOR DELAY IN ACTION

Should Have Acted at First Sign of Mob Trouble, Say Citizens—Ringer Silent and Eberstein Disappears.

A demand for immediate declaration of a state of martial law in Omaha was made by leading business men in a hastily convened meeting in the city council chamber immediately after the lynching of the negro last night. Ward Burgess, Everett Buckingham, R. C. Howe, L. C. Nash, Randall Brown, Lloyd Skinner and a number of other prominent citizens were present, with City Commissioners Zimman, Ure and Ringer.

The meeting was called to make an attempt to meet the serious situation which faces the city. Commissioner Zimman presided until Mr. Ure had been summoned from his home, when he took the chair.

To Protect Negroes.

Two hundred troops were reported to be on their way to Omaha from Des Moines to protect the colored citizens and prevent further trouble. Up to a late hour no communication had been established with Governor McKelvie who is absent from home. Permission to get troops from Fort Omaha and Fort Crook will be secured through him.

Ward Burgess declared that he would get the authority from Washington to get these troops if it can be secured in no other way. Ringer Silent; Eberstein Gone. Commissioner Ringer last night would not discuss the riot. He refused to affirm or deny a report that he was inside the court house while the riot of the evening was going on.

Chief of Police Eberstein could not be located after the lynching. Mr. Burgess declared that the riot, burning of the court house and lynching of the negro constitute the most flagrant disgrace that has ever blotted the name of Omaha.

"But it has happened," he said, "and we must meet the new condition. Plenty of Troops. 'I believe the situation now should be handled with an iron hand. If an iron hand had been used earlier today the riot could probably have been avoided. But now is no time to hesitate. Let us have troops here and plenty of them.'

Elmer Thomas declared that a body of armed citizens could be organized instead of calling for troops. A motion was made that a state of martial law should be declared in the city. Attorney F. A. Brogan objected to this and pointed out what the meaning of martial law is. "It means," he said, "that no courts can sit, no police act none of the ordinary functions of civil government go on without the permission of the military authorities. I don't think we want to order that here yet. The situation is very serious and we need troops (Continued On Page Seven, Column Six.)

Mayor Smith Who Had Narrow Escape When He Tried to Argue With Mob Leaders



This picture of Mayor Smith was taken a year ago, when a flying circus was here promoting a Liberty bond campaign. The mayor made a flight with Lieutenant Hill, an English aviator.

Accused Negro Who Paid With His Life For Attack on Girl



Will Brown.

Casualties in Riot

- LIST OF DEAD. Will Brown, negro, accused of the assault of Miss Loebeck. Man, 23 years old, supposed to be Clarence Clancy, shot eight times. Dead at Y. M. C. A. LIST OF INJURED. Mayor Ed P. Smith, severely cut about head and possible fractured skull; unconscious. Police Officer Robert P. Samardick, badly beaten in afternoon. Police Officer Heinie Bosen, beaten and wrist sprained, at Eleventh and Jackson streets. Special Agent F. A. Heisler, Union Pacific, beaten about head. Also struck on head with rock. Arm sprained. Frank Dobin, 3018 South Eighteenth street, beaten and finger broken, at Eleventh and Jackson streets. Unidentified boy shot in knee. Attended at Y. M. C. A. Taken home by friends. Conrad Field, Fremont, Neb., shot in back. Taken to Y. M. C. A. for emergency treatment and then to Wise Memorial hospital. Seriously wounded. J. Nafsinger, Sampson, Ala., shot in hip. Bullet removed at Methodist hospital. Condition not serious. Harold Bullets, grocery clerk, 2919 St. Marys avenue. In St. Josephs hospital. Shot in leg. Not serious. Police Officer Andrew Trapp, badly beaten. Treated at Central police station and taken home. J. R. Feere, 1105 Pacific street, shot in leg. Was on third floor of court house when shot. Police Officer Dworak, South Side, was struck over the head with a gun. He was taken to Y. M. C. A. and then to his home. Injuries not considered serious. John Hudspeth, 1333 South Twenty-eighth street, shot in shoulder; not serious. Arthur Hall, 16 years old, 4910 Twenty-eighth street, badly beaten, at Twenty-fourth and Grant streets. Police Officer W. J. Turner, South Side, left leg broken by shot. Detective Jack Graham, shot in left hand and neck. Gilbert McMurray, fireman No. 7, rock fell on neck and his back may be broken. Pete McDermott, fireman No. 16, overcome by gas in court house. Rescued by Johnny Lee and taken to Y. M. C. A. Not serious. Captain R. Dunlap, fireman, beam fell on shoulder. J. W. Murdoon, 416 Karbach block, shot in mouth. Man thought to be Fred Morasko, shot. Taken to (Continued On Page Seven, Column Six.)

LYNCHING COMMITTEE OF 30 RECEIVES WILL BROWN FROM OTHER COURT HOUSE PRISONERS

Chief Eberstein Remains in Jail Until Prisoner is Delivered Over to Crowd—Negro Hanged From Pole in Front of South Side of Court House and Body Then Tied to Automobile and Driven to Seventeenth and Dodge Streets, Where Burning Takes Place—Many Shot, But Only Two Fatalities Reported—Frenzied Populace Endeavors to Hang Mayor Smith Early in the Evening, But Fails—Soldiers Called Out at Last Moment—Firemen Prevented from Fighting Blaze.

Will Brown, negro, was lynched by a crowd at Eighteenth and Harney streets at 10:55 last night after several hours' endeavor to gain admittance to the court house which was a seething furnace when the black man was taken down a ladder by leaders of the mob.

Brown, charged with assault upon Agnes Loebeck, 19-year-old white girl of 3228 South Second street, last Thursday night, was crazed with fright when his captors gained admittance to the cell room on the top floor of the court house.

After being riddled with bullets at the pole where it hung, the body was dragged to Seventeenth and Dodge streets, where it was burned.

The lynching occurred after one of the most spectacular scenes ever witnessed in Omaha. For several hours the court house was surrounded by a mob of 10,000 interested in watching the destruction by fire of the new \$1,500,000 court house and also in awaiting the fate of the negro whose life hung in the balance.

RUSH BROWN DOWN STAIRS. Negro prisoners in the county jail rushed Brown down the stairway from the jail when the fire threatened to reach the cell room and, forcing Sheriff Mike Clark out of the way, hurried Brown to the floor below where they turned him over to a lynching committee.

Two are dead and thirty-nine injured as a result of the lynching.

At 3 o'clock this morning Major White and 700 soldiers from Fort Omaha were patrolling the streets downtown. Machineguns were stationed around the city. Soldiers with bayonets drawn, stopped every pedestrian and automobile and ordered them off the street.

The remnants of the mob dragged the charred torso of Brown through the streets until an early hour this morning.

All sorts of rumors went through the crowd. One report was that Sheriff Clark had been shot.

Many were injured when they attempted to force their way inside the court house up to the sheriff's office.

SCALE SIDES OF BUILDINGS. When the fire began to make its way to the jail rooms on the top floor of the court house, the fire department, previously unsuccessful in quenching the fire, broomed ladders which were extended on the west side of the court house. Civilians who were adept in scaling the sides of buildings, gained the second floor window landings, and went on to the third and the fourth floors by means of ropes. Windows were smashed in and the workers were heartened by the cheering of the crowd below. In the meantime the flutter of an American flag was observed from the county office.

"Bring down the negro!" was a command frequently heard from members of the determined crowd.

Mayor Smith was seized by the mob on Seventeenth street, near the court house, at 10 o'clock, and was threatened with lynching. He was hustled to Harney street and stopped at the foot of a trolley pole on the cross-arm of which was a coil of rope.

"Give us the key to the jail." "If we can't get the negro we'll lynch you." "He's no better than the negro." "He's a negro lover," were cries heard in the mob.

"Get that rope," someone shouted. It was pulled down by a loose end, but was not long enough to reach. A man climbed the pole with a knife and cut the rope. It was brought down and placed around the neck of the mayor.

YELL, "STRING THE MAYOR UP." "Throw it up over the pole and string the mayor up," yelled a dozen voices. The mob surged to and fro. The mayor was the center of a crush so great that it almost overthrew an automobile standing near.

The rope was placed around the mayor's neck but it wasn't thrown over the pole. Appalled at the possibility of murdering the city's chief executive, voices began to be heard:

"We won't stand for hanging the mayor"; "That won't get us the nigger"; "Let 'im go"; "Tell 'im to get out of here."

The crowd began to move. It surged down Harney street. The mayor was in the midst of it. This excitement being over, many rushed back to the court house conflagration and the mayor disappeared.

The mayor entered an automobile standing near the scene. Angry cries surged up again immediately. The automobile was overturned and the mayor had a narrow escape from more serious injury.

The car caught fire and burned up. Mayor Smith was rushed to the Ford hospital following the attempt to lynch him. Dr. E. C. Henry attended him. Until an early hour this morning, the mayor was still unconscious from severe injuries received to his head. The extent of his injuries has not been determined. Strenuous efforts to suppress all reports concerning the mayor injuries were made.

USE NEW ROPE FOR LYNCHING. The lynching was done with a new three-quarters inch rope.

When the body hung still, high in the air the rope was cut. The naked body fell to the pavement. Men cursed and kicked it. The rope was fastened quickly to an automobile which drove off slowly through the crowd, the horrible object at its end blood-covered and dragging along the pavement through the crowd.

The automobile proceeded only a short distance when the rope was unfastened and the body was dragged by as many men as could get hold of the rope up Nineteenth street to Farnam, east to Eighteenth, north to Douglas, east to Seventeenth and thence to Dodge street where the mob stopped. The body was covered with kerosene taken from fire truck lanterns and the match applied. The crowd danced around while the flames shot up.

It was the original intention to drag the body to Twenty-fourth and Lake streets, the center of a large negro settlement. This was abandoned, however, after the mob left the scene of the lynching.

A young man leaped on the top of an automobile and made an impassioned speech. "Don't go to Twenty-fourth and Lake streets tonight," he said. "Those negroes up there are all armed and your life will be endangered. Don't go up there tonight. Go up there tomorrow when you're armed right and you can get as many of them as you like. But not tonight."

"We'll go tomorrow," yelled a man. "You bet, we'll go tomorrow," came back many voices. (Continued on Page Two, Column One.)

"Too Terrible to Talk About," Says Victim of Negro's Assault

Agnes Loebeck, the girl who was assaulted by Brown, was told of the lynching shortly after it occurred. "I am sure he is the man," she said, "but the whole thing is too terrible to talk about." "He is a brute and deserved to be hung," exclaimed Louise Loebeck, Agnes' sister.